

Write from the Deep
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Going Deeper Workshop: Overcoming Damaging Self-Talk
Segment 6: Developing an Effective Mindset: Action Steps

One of the best things you can do for your writing career is to view it with a growth mindset. That's a mindset that views your life and career as if you're on a learning curve. If you can infuse your self-talk with language that reflects the understanding and belief that you CAN and ARE growing, it'll be a weapon you can use to defeat damaging self-talk.

A growth mindset believes that writing is a skill you can learn. It's not a fixed, innate skill you can't get if you weren't born with it. We want our self-talk to reflect that mindset.

Challenges and difficulties in our writing journey sometimes cause us to give in to fixed mindset thoughts:

- *This is too hard for me.*
- *That was my best effort and I failed.*
- *I can't learn how to do a newsletter.*
- *I don't know the first thing about a website, so I'm doomed.*

Those statements discourage and derail us. While it's hard to view those crises and concerns positively, they *can* be positive. They can be an opportunity to grow. We can help ourselves view them as such by using the language of a growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset. Here are some examples:

- You've just gotten back your third critique in a row saying your main character isn't compelling, and you're saying to yourself, "I can't do this. Whatever made me think I could do this?" That reflects a fixed mindset.
 - Change the script to growth mindset language: "I may not be able to do this *yet*, but I can learn to do it."
 - When you harness the power of "yet" and speak with a growth mindset, your latest attempt at a compelling main character isn't a failure. It's a "not yet."
- You've been stuck for two weeks with a problem in your manuscript. You're frustrated and tired. The damaging self-talk that can grow out of that is "I will never get past this block." That reflects a fixed mindset.
 - Change the script to "I feel stuck in my writing right now, but I can learn better techniques and get more ideas."

- It's okay to admit your feelings! But the growth mindset doesn't keep you trapped there.
- Today's best effort is a stepping stone to tomorrow's even better effort. We can learn because God made us that way.
- You've spent two years writing and rewriting a manuscript, and finally you've realized it's just not publishable. You need to scrap it and start fresh with a brand new idea. It's tempting to say, "Every word I've written has been a waste."
 - A growth mindset believes nothing has been wasted.
 - A growth mindset says, "All these words I've written are part of my growth and learning process. That manuscript was an education."

Here are a few other examples of damaging self-talk that comes from a fixed mindset, and how to rescript it with a growth mindset:

Fixed mindset: There's no use in trying.

Growth mindset: Yay me! I'm trying. Trying is the process of improving.

- Celebrate trying. Reward yourself!
- Remember, the goal is not just to stop damaging self-talk, but to replace it with helpful truth.
- The more something is repeated, the more it seems true, the more it seems true, the more we believe it and act in accordance with it.

Fixed mindset: I've failed, I should give up.

Growth mindset: That didn't go as I'd hoped, but now I've learned something. I'll do better on the next try.

- We can learn from our mistakes!

Fixed mindset: This is hard. I should quit.

Growth mindset: This is hard, but that's okay because effort is the path to improving.

- Let's be honest. Writing *is* hard. That doesn't mean you can't do it. It means you have to work hard to do it.

Action Steps: Identify and Rescript Fixed Mindset Language in Your Own Examples

1. Look at the list you made of damaging self talk. Evaluate the sentences one by one to see if any reflect a fixed mindset. You're looking for words that
 - a. box you in;
 - b. focus on the now rather than on potential;
 - c. make you seem stuck;
 - d. make you feel your effort is pointless; or
 - e. make you feel as if it's you personally who's being judged rather than your work.
2. When you find something that reflects a fixed mindset, write FIXED MINDSET in big red letters over the top, just like you did for lies that you found.
3. Consider ways to rewrite that damaging self-talk using words that reflect a growth mindset, then write that new sentence in the lines below.
4. Cross out your damaging self-talk!
5. As you're doing these action steps, you'll likely find damaging self-talk that can be combated with more than just one method. For example, some lies also reflect a fixed mindset. It's okay to write red letters over those lies too, and over the course of this workshop, write as many ways as you want to combat damaging self-talk. That's why there are several lines available.

When you're dealing with damaging self-talk, your mindset matters.

- When our language and our thought processes reflect growth, we're acknowledging a God who has created us as living, breathing, growing creatures.
- We're also acknowledging that nothing is impossible with God.